

# Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

## War Related Illness and Injury Study Center

### Washington DC VA Medical Center



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WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship Director  
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<https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/warrelatedillness/training-opportunities/dc/>



**Application Due Date:** December 31, 2021  
**Fellowship Year Begins:** September 6, 2022

### Accreditation Status

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the Washington DC VA Medical Center meets Houston Conference guidelines for board certification per ABCN guidelines. It is not currently accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association.

### Application and Selection Procedures

Training begins in September 2022. This is a two-year, full-time program with VA benefits, including annual leave, sick leave, health insurance, and federal holidays. Current stipend/salary is \$52,140 for Year One, increasing to \$54,958 for Year Two. Our program is designed to provide two full years of postdoctoral training. However, advancement to the second year is contingent on successful completion of first year requirements.

We are recruiting for **one** WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellow for the 2022-2024 training period and anticipate interviewing candidates in January 2022. Interviews by video teleconference are strongly preferred. Notifications will likely be made prior to the APPCN match rank order submission deadline. Reciprocal offers will be considered if an applicant is able to demonstrate a verifiable offer from another program.

### Eligibility

To be considered for our postdoctoral training program, applicants must have completed a doctoral degree in Clinical or Counseling Psychology from an American Psychological Association (APA) or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) accredited program and must have completed or be on track to complete an APA-accredited Psychology Pre-Doctoral Internship. Certification of U.S. citizenship and drug screening are required for all VA Postdoctoral Fellows. In addition, VA employment requires that males born after December 31, 1959 must have registered for selective service by age 26. Please review VA eligibility requirements for psychology trainees at [www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp](http://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp) before applying.

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship seeks and values diverse experiences and backgrounds as the building blocks of a rich training environment. Our program emphasizes respect for trainees, Veterans, and staff members representing all forms of diversity, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, Veteran status, and political affiliation. Fellows are entitled to equal treatment in selection decisions and freedom from harassment and unfair treatment.

This program seeks to admit trainees from diverse backgrounds while selecting the most qualified candidates. As such, individuals from diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. VA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and the training program follows institutional guidelines in this regard. Successful completion of this

program meets postdoctoral supervised practice requirements for licensure by the Washington DC Board of Psychology.

### **Application Materials**

Please submit the following materials in electronic format to Dr. Brewster through the APPA CAS Postdoc Online Application:

1. A cover letter that describes:
  - a. Your background, current professional interests, and training goals
  - b. Specific reasons you are interested in training at the WRIISC-DC
  - c. Experience with neuropsychological assessment, diagnosis, and treatment, including settings you have worked in and patient populations you have worked with
  - d. Research experience and aspirations. What questions would you like to try to answer?
  - e. Strengths and weaknesses in clinical and research work
2. Curriculum vitae
3. Three letters of recommendation from faculty members or clinical supervisors who are familiar with your clinical work and research experience. Letters should be submitted directly from writers.
4. Graduate transcripts
5. Two recent neuropsychological assessment reports. Please de-identify samples according to HIPAA standards
6. One research work sample (e.g., a first-author published article, chapter, or presentation)
7. A letter from your Dissertation Chair or Director of Clinical Training (DCT) specifying the expected date that you will complete requirements necessary to complete your degree (e.g., successfully defend your dissertation and complete your clinical internship). If a Chair or DCT is able to provide a recommendation in this letter, this may be included as one of the three required.

Application materials must be submitted in the APPA CAS portal by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at 11:59pm EST.

Please contact Ryan Brewster, PhD, WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship Director, via electronic mail at [Ryan.Brewster@va.gov](mailto:Ryan.Brewster@va.gov) with any questions about the application process.

### **Training Setting**



The WRIISC-DC is housed within the Washington DC VA Medical Center, a 205-bed hospital that provides care to more than 78,000 Veterans on an outpatient basis. There is a nursing home (the Community Living Center, or CLC) located on-site. In addition, the medical center has 5 satellite outpatient clinics (CBOCs) located in Charlotte Hall, MD, northeast Washington, DC (the Community Resource and Referral Center, or CRRC), Fort Belvoir, VA, southeast Washington, DC, and Prince George's County, MD.

The DC VAMC is located in the heart of the District of Columbia, approximately 3 miles from the US Capitol, 4 miles from the White House, and in close proximity to a number of other medical centers (e.g., MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital and Children's National Hospital). Washington, DC is a vibrant, diverse city with many charming neighborhoods, exciting cultural opportunities (including the Smithsonian museums, which offer free admission), extensive and excellent dining and nightlife options, a comprehensive public transportation system, sports arenas, beautiful parks, and trails providing access to outdoor recreational activities.

### **Training Model and Program Philosophy**

The WRIISC is a national program that provides a second opinion for Veterans with war-related illnesses and injuries that remain unexplained after examinations by local VA medical centers. Three WRIISC centers, located in Washington, DC, East Orange, NJ, and Palo Alto, CA, were established to address these complex cases. Veterans from the southeastern US are referred to the WRIISC-DC, where they receive comprehensive interdisciplinary evaluations tailored to their medical concerns. Diagnoses are made when possible, and recommendations for management of the Veteran's concerns are given to the Veteran and their referring medical center. The WRIISC-DC team includes clinical (e.g., integrative medicine, occupational medicine, neurology, nutrition, deployment health, neuropsychology, social work, environmental exposure, and health coaching) and research (e.g., neuroscience, exercise physiology, neuroimaging, and cognitive science) staff. Fellows that join our interdisciplinary team have the opportunity to directly assist our unique population.

The WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship provides clinical (approximately 50% of weekly responsibilities), research, and educational outreach training. Fellows can expect to develop advanced skills in neuropsychological assessment (including teleneuropsychology) and consultation with a medically-complex population. Trainees have access to a repository of cognitive, emotional, sleep, exercise, treatment adherence, and war-related exposure data, and will be supported in generating a feasible research project within the time constraints of the fellowship. Fellows are supported in learning how to interpret, adapt, and incorporate new clinical research findings from the literature into everyday clinical practice.

### **Clinical Overview**

Throughout the course of the two-year postdoctoral fellowship, the fellow will be provided with opportunities and training to develop a strong foundation of knowledge and skills pertinent to advanced clinical practice in neuropsychology. Supervision hours per week may vary by number of Veterans seen but will not fall below two regularly scheduled hours. Through a variety of training-related activities, the fellow will learn fundamentals of functional neuroanatomy, neuropathology, and neuropsychological assessment. The neuropsychology fellow will develop skills working in an interdisciplinary setting and providing consultation to providers with varied backgrounds. Neuropsychological assessment is often a key component of a WRIISC-DC evaluation and the feedback provided by the neuropsychology fellow to the Veteran and their medical team can be critical. Although the fellow's primary clinical assignment is with the WRIISC-DC, the fellow will also see clinical cases through the DC VAMC Polytrauma Service.

#### **1. Clinical Caseload and Supervision: WRIISC-DC**

The fellow is expected to see up to four WRIISC comprehensive neuropsychological evaluations per month, supervised primarily by the WRIISC-DC Fellowship Director (Dr. Brewster) and occasionally by the WRIISC-DC Director (Dr. Reinhard). Trainees present cases at a weekly WRIISC Clinical Team interdisciplinary meeting. The fellow will also participate in the screening of WRIISC-DC consults to inform the team of any potential cognitive, emotional, or risk-related concerns that could lead to deferral, modification, or acceptance of each individual consult. A weekly individual supervision hour will be completed with Dr. Brewster and additional supervision will be provided as needed.

**To continue to address the needs of national Veterans referred for comprehensive care despite travel and/or health-related barriers, WRIISC-DC offers remote, clinic-to-home assessments including the interview, testing, and feedback components of our evaluations. Fellows will become proficient with both clinic-to-home and clinic-to-clinic telehealth models for providing neuropsychological assessment, alongside traditional in-person practice.**

2. Clinical Caseload and Supervision: DC VAMC Polytrauma Service

The fellow will have the opportunity to gain experience evaluating and treating Veterans with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and related co-morbidities under the supervision of the Polytrauma Clinic Faculty. Training opportunities may include provision of outpatient psychotherapy and participation (e.g., observation and research) in a social cognition rehabilitation group for Veterans with TBI and PTSD. There is also the potential to participate in neuropsychological assessments through the Polytrauma Clinic. Caseload in the Polytrauma Clinic will be arranged between Dr. Brewster, Dr. Levson, and the fellow.

### **Research Overview**

The research component of the fellowship is designed to provide advanced training in health care research related to deployment-related illnesses and injuries. Fellows will have the opportunity to enhance their research skills through a variety of educational, mentoring, and training activities. Fellows will be involved in multiple projects relevant to the WRIISC that involve programmatic research, research that informs VA policy, environmental exposure research, neuroimaging research, and other topics. In addition, fellows are encouraged to develop a mentored research project based on their own interests. Fellows will mentor study coordinators in research activities, practice presentation skills in research meetings, collaborate with other WRIISC team members on presentations/posters, and assist with protocol and grant application writing. Fellows will receive individualized research supervision and mentoring from Drs. Costanzo, Brewster, and Reinhard.

1. Ongoing WRIISC Research:

Fellows will become involved in at least one research project initiated and directed by WRIISC staff. Research may involve analyses with an administrative database, working directly with research participants, evaluating clinical efficacy, efficiency, utilization, or assisting with program development. A variety of neuropsychological assessment, medical symptomatology, treatment adherence, sleep, exercise, EEG, eye-tracking, and war-related exposure data are currently being analyzed and published in an effort to improve healthcare and policies related to the welfare of Veterans with complex medical concerns. **WRIISC-DC has transitioned the majority of current research projects to a telehealth model, which has allowed for uninterrupted remote data collection.**

2. Fellow Research Project:

Fellows will design a mentored research study that can be completed within the term of the fellowship. This may include developing a sub-study based on an existent IRB-approved project or developing an independent study. Drs. Costanzo and Brewster will provide guidance in the development of a testable research idea, preparation of a research proposal, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the results (i.e., an abstract or manuscript). Mentors will also provide guidance on submission of protocols to the VA IRB and R&D Department.

## Educational Activities

1. **Neuropsychology Distance Learning (NDL) Series:** Fellows will participate in a weekly neuropsychology video teleconference meeting with trainees and supervisors from several other neuropsychology training programs including (but not limited to) Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, San Antonio Military Medical Center, Medstar National Rehabilitation Hospital, University of Texas Southwest Medical Center, and VA Maryland Health Care Center. This fellow-led educational activity generally includes one hour of reading discussion and one hour of case presentation per week. Each fellow will also practice skills necessary to prepare for board certification (e.g mock ABPP-CN fact findings). In addition, fellows will have the option to participate in an optional Fact-Finding and Study Club, focused on sharpening skills necessary to complete both the written and oral portions of the ABPP-CN board exam.
2. **Neuropsychology Service Seminar:** Fellows will participate in a weekly MH Neuropsychology Service seminar. The seminar includes presentations on a variety of neuropsychology-related topics, case conferences, and discussion of journal articles.
3. **WRIISC-DC Journal Club:** Fellows will participate in a periodic meeting with WRIISC-DC staff and colleagues from outside departments to present research findings and discuss journal articles covering clinical and research interests of the group (e.g., exposure, health coaching, neuropsychological assessment, neuroimaging, etc.). Fellows will present an article of interest at least twice per year.
4. **WRIISC Monthly Mental Health Meeting:** Fellows can participate in a monthly meeting with Tri-WRIISC colleagues (i.e., personnel from our sister sites in New Jersey and California) to discuss journal articles, clinical practice topics and emerging research on a wide range of mental health areas.
5. **Professional Conference Attendance:** Throughout the training year, fellows will have the opportunity to attend professional conferences with funding typically covered by the WRIISC for one conference per year. Following return from a professional conference, the fellow is expected to provide an informal presentation of relevant material to the fellowship faculty.

Additional educational activities are available at/near the DC VAMC campus. Attendance is encouraged, but not required. Activities will include but are not limited to:

- DC VAMC Neurology Grand Rounds
- DC VAMC Pathology Brain Cutting Conference
- MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital Didactics and Journal Club
- TeleECHO Integrative Cognitive Rehabilitation Seminars

## Performance Evaluation

Fellows will receive formal, face-to-face feedback in regard to progress being made in the fellowship at three points during each training year. Formal feedback will include written evaluation that includes ratings in professional competency areas related to clinical practice and scholarly inquiry. Fellows who receive ratings below developmentally-appropriate minimums in each competency area will be given specific feedback and training to improve their skills in these areas. If necessary, remediation plans designed to assist with any difficulty demonstrating development in professional competencies will be created by training faculty and completed by the fellow before the conclusion of the training program. Fellows will have the opportunity to evaluate supervisors during each evaluation period and will rate the training program as a whole, yearly. Feedback from fellows is an integral part of the continued development and improvement of the fellowship. Fellows will also be presented with a description of these evaluation procedures, mechanisms to document complaints, their rights and responsibilities related to evaluations, current due process procedures, and

methods to express concerns/address grievances related to training or supervision at the start of the fellowship.

### **Training Faculty**

*Ryan Brewster, Ph.D. – WRIISC-DC Neuropsychology Fellowship Director*

*Matthew Reinhard, Psy.D. – WRIISC-DC Director*

*Michelle Costanzo, Ph.D. – WRIISC-DC Research Director*

*Scott Levson, Psy.D. – DC VAMC Polytrauma Psychologist*

### **Recent Trainees**

*2017-2019 fellow:*

*Chmaika Mills, Ph.D., Howard University*

*Internship: Washington, DC VA Medical Center*

*2016-2018 fellow:*

*Carleen Schwimmer, Psy.D., American School of Professional Psychology*

*Internship: Bay Pines VA Medical Center*

*2015-2017 fellows:*

*Kayleigh Hale, Psy.D., Pepperdine University*

*Internship: Long Beach VA Medical Center*

*Lauren Skalina, Ph.D., American University*

*Internship: VA Maryland Health Care System*

*2014-2016 fellow:*

*Salya Namazi, Ph.D., California School of Professional Psychology at AIC*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2013-2015 fellow:*

*Stephanie Brooks Holliday, Ph.D., Drexel University*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2012-2014 fellow:*

*Courtney Murphy, Ph.D., Palo Alto University*

*Internship: VA Maryland Health Care System*

*2011-2013 fellow:*

*Amanda Hull, Ph.D., Palo Alto University*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2010-2012 fellow:*

*Alyssa Adams, Ph.D., Marywood University*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*

*2008-2010 fellow:*

*Kelly McCarron, Psy.D., The Wright Institute*

*Internship: Washington DC VA Medical Center*